

Appendix A:

DES Environmental Equity Policy



2002 Edition

Environmental Equity

New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services

Policy Statement: *The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services will, within its authority, ensure fair and equitable treatment of all New Hampshire citizens in the implementation of federal and state environmental laws, rules, programs, and policies.*

Background

There is a body of evidence that suggests that, in certain instances around the country, minority and lower income citizens, neighborhoods, and/or communities have faced an inequitable share of the risks associated with environmental hazards. While the issues and concerns regarding environmental equity (also commonly referred to as Environmental Justice or “EJ”) vary from state to state and from community to community, the core issue is one of fairness in the siting, monitoring, and/or cleanup of facilities, and the regulation of activities that may produce environmental hazards. The documentation for this issue at the national level suggests that, for a variety of reasons not necessarily discriminatory by intent, minority and lower income populations have sometimes borne a disproportionate share of the risks from activities which cause air, water, or soil pollution.

One of the primary factors contributing to “environmental inequities” is the co-location of many minority and lower income populations in more densely developed and industrialized areas with greater concentrations of environmental hazards. While this suggests that environmental equity is more of an urban issue, there are other factors such as siting decisions which apply to all areas of the state. It is important to recognize that inequities may exist, and then make a commitment to work toward their elimination. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services has created and adopted the above policy to recognize this issue and has devised the following implementation strategy to honor that commitment.

Implementation Strategy

DES’s overall approach in implementing this policy is to incorporate equity considerations – in context with other key factors such as environmental risk – into every applicable decision or action. More specifically, DES will take the following steps to initiate and continue implementation of its Environmental Equity Policy:

- ❖ Post the Environmental Equity Policy throughout the agency’s offices (both at headquarters and at regional sites) and provide a copy to all staff.
- ❖ Use the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (“EPA”) national criteria for identifying areas of concern according to race, ethnicity, economic status, or community (as modified for New Hampshire) in implementing the Environmental Equity Policy.
- ❖ Develop and distribute written guidance and provide training on incorporating the Environmental Equity Policy into DES’s daily decisions or actions. These decisions or actions take the form of such things as development, public education and outreach, technical assistance, rulemaking, permit application reviews, compliance monitoring, enforcement actions, emergency response, complaint response, and site cleanup.
- ❖ Incorporate the Environmental Equity Policy into all appropriate annual work plans and grant applications.
- ❖ Add implementation of the Environmental Equity Policy as a specific objective in DES’s **Strategic Plan**, and monitor progress with implementation as part of that plan’s annual review.

